

Social Studies Currents



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History Day entry

Learning is not attained by chance. It must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.

- Abigail Adams

Students Show Their Stuff: *History Day, We the People and Teaching the Teachers*

History Day

Over 200 young historians from all over the state competed in the Vermont History Day contest held on Saturday, April 8 at Spaulding High School in Barre. The Vermont Historical Society organized the program in which students presented their research on historical topics centered around the national theme: "Taking a Stand in History: People, Ideas, Events."

Governor James Douglas was present to talk with the students and see the hard work they put into their projects. He also stayed to present each of over 60 awards to the finalists. U.S. Congressman Bernie Sanders also made remarks and praised the students for their interest in and preservation of

history. The state competition involved students in grades 6-12, with separate categories for Junior Division (grades 6-8) and Senior Division (grades 9-12). Each division includes seven categories that showcase individual and group projects in formats ranging from written research papers to dramatic performances, documentaries, and exhibits. A variety of individuals and organizations, including the National Life Group and the Women's History Project, sponsored special prizes that recognized exemplary entries.

First and second place rankings in each category will advance to the National History Day contest, to be held on June 11-15 at the University of Maryland at College Park. National History

Day is the nation's leading educational program for history education in schools. The program annually draws 700,000 participants in grades 6 through 12 in 48 states, the District of Columbia and American Samoa.

The state coordinator for Vermont History Day is Amy Cunningham of the Vermont Historical Society. To learn more about the Vermont History Day program, please contact (802) 479-8518 or visit: www.vermonthistory.org/educate/histday/nhdinfo.htm

We the People

On April 28, students from Essex High School in Essex Junction will travel to Washington, D.C., **CONT. ON PAGE 4**

Champlain Valley Social Studies Network

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Landscape Change

Teachers from all around the Champlain Valley gathered at Champlain College on April 17th for the first meeting of the area's social studies network, a collaborative effort between the Champlain Valley Educator Development Center (<http://campus.champlain.edu/cvedc>) and the DOE. After sharing some examples of their recent classroom successes, participants learned about UVM's Landscape Change Program, an extensive archive of paired historic and recent photos of Vermont landscapes. The Landscape Change Program works with townspeople and local historical societies to scan and upload images as well as to add information about existing photos. Since anyone is welcome to look for and scan historic photos or artwork of their hometown at

local historical societies and other sources, participants spent some time talking about how this program could be used with their students. As one participant said, "I thoroughly enjoyed the morning presentation. It generated ideas which we can use with our new social studies curriculum. It was good to be here with other members of my grade level team to begin brainstorming ideas."

For more information visit their web site at <http://www.uvm.edu/perkins/landscape/menu.html>.

Alexander Hamilton

In the afternoon, participants viewed the traveling exhibit "Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America" and received related classroom

and reference materials. This exhibit, cosponsored by the New York Historical Society and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, will be at Champlain College until April 28th. You can also find more information at Gilder Lehrman's vast web site of primary source documents and other educational materials, located at <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/index.html>.

Finally, the group brainstormed needs for future network meetings. These included unit and assessment development, networking time by grade level, working with the GEs, presentations by visiting scholars, learning more about Vermont's historic sites, and many others.



Against the Darkness: An Indigenous Film

Against the Darkness, a new DVD/CD, traces seven generations of an Abenaki family from a signer of the 1765 Missisquoi charter to members of the Swanton, Vermont indigenous community of today. Young Vermont Abenakis recount this story of cultural survival and triumph through narration, reenactment and exploration of original historic objects, documents, and archival photographs.

Against the Darkness began as a concept for an Abenaki Heritage Celebration pageant at Missisquoi Valley Union High School in May 2004. In the fall of that year, the video was created to support the Missisquoi Abenaki Community in their quest for official recognition. In 2005, the

video's message of cultural endurance slowly developed into a broad-based celebration of historic and modern Abenaki culture and community.

The 35-minute video will be released to educational institutions in the fall of 2006 as an interactive DVD/CD combo, complete with teachers' guides and extensive resource sections including bibliographies, artifact images, essays, genealogies and special materials developed for use by students and teachers.

Look for news of professional development opportunities centered around the DVD release soon.

Some additional resources for teaching about the Abenaki:

History Kit: Abenaki in Vermont (*Vermont Historical Society*)
<http://www.vermonthistory.org/educate/lendkits/abenaki.htm>

Abenaki Nation Web Site
<http://www.abenakination.org/>

The Abenaki of Vermont Video (*Vermont Folklife Center*)
<http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/teachers.htm>

Vermont's Native American Past: Artifact Cart (*Chimney Point State Historic Site, Addison, VT*)
<http://www.HistoricVermont.org/g/ChimneyPoint>

Vermont Intercultural Semesters Update

The following are excerpts from an email from Curtis Koren, Exec. Dir. of VIS:

"The Vermont journalism team -- Chris Albertine from Vermont Public Radio, Greg Sharrow of the Vermont Folklife Center, and I -- are delighted to report that the VIS Pilot program in radio and print journalism is well underway! We spent two weeks in March at Students Educational & Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), working with students and teachers on documentary field research techniques, and the technical aspects of interviewing and collecting sound for radio. During our short visit, students wrote and edited four radio pieces: a moving

'audio postcard' and three profiles of Ladakhi friends, including a SECMOL student who comes from a nomadic family in the Changtang region of Ladakh bordering Tibet. These practice pieces, produced in just a few days of intense work, were enthusiastically received by Ladakhis and Americans at a special presentation in the grand hall at SECMOL..."

"The VIS curriculum has been designed to take advantage of being in the Himalayan region and culture of Ladakh. One remarkable school day I spent with the group began with a trip to a monastery to attend a Buddhist festival that included masked dancers. In the afternoon, the group traveled to Ladakh's capital

city of Leh for visits with guest speakers, including staff from the Snow Leopard Conservancy, which studies these elusive animals. Later in the month, the 'VISibles' trekked to the village of Rumbak, located at 14,000 ft. in Hemis National Park, and known for many sightings of snow leopards..."

"Another trek, at the beginning of April, took the VIS group to the Nubra Valley, sandwiched between the Karakoram Mountains to the north and the Ladakh Range to the south, and only opened to foreigners in 1994. Nubra is reached via a road that is the highest in the world, 18,380 ft at its summit (a thousand feet higher than Everest Base Camp)..."

NEW! Social Studies Resource on the Web

- **Vermont Studies**
- **Sample Performance Assessments and Assessment Items**

These and additional lists can be used as a starting point in developing curricula and are not meant to be all-inclusive.

To access these resources go to

http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_curriculum/history.html.

It is only in adventure that some people succeed in knowing themselves -- in finding themselves.

- Andre Gide

UVM Promotes Middle School Debate

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As one middle school teacher put it, "They (students) are anxious to speak, but we need to help them learn to listen." The middle grades are challenging times for students, teachers and administrators – not to mention parents. To address this need, UVM is partnering with the Vermont Principals' Association, the Vermont Debate and Forensics League, and middle school debate organizers all over the world to promote middle school debate.

Benefits Middle Schoolers

Two of the factors about the middle school experience have made it clear that debating is a viable and rewarding option for these students: 1) There is a shortage of intellectual extracurricular activities for middle school students; 2) These years are a crucial time when students form their self-

concepts. Who they think they are now can be very important in influencing who they can become; having a strong self concept can help steer students in the right direction. Debate experience helps students realize that they are thinkers, speakers, advocates and individuals who can have opinions and can influence others around them. Debate teaches students that through their ideas and advocacy they can make a difference.

UVM Debate Programs

The Lawrence Debate Union at UVM has been a leading debate training organization since 1899. In cooperation with the Speech and Debate program at UVM and the division of Continuing Education and the World Debate Institute the Lawrence Debate Union is promoting middle school debate in two major ways:

1. Outreach to middle school teachers, administrators and students.

In cooperation with the Middle School Public Debate Program (<http://middleschooldebate.com/>) UVM is providing instructional materials, DVD copies of middle school debates and other assistance to help teachers organize their own programs. This program is not designed to establish programs or leagues, but to assist interested teachers and others to create their own programs and leagues, as has been done in many parts of the country. More information about the UVM program can be found at <http://debate.uvm.edu/vtmiddleschool.htm>.

2. Provide a one-week summer training program at UVM for middle school students. Now in its second year, the program guides

students through the tasks of giving speeches, framing arguments, engaging in refutation and acquiring information about topics to be debated. The program will be held from July 9 until July 15, 2006. There will also be a healthy mix of recreational and social activities to keep students stimulated and busy. Scholarships are available. Information can be found at <http://learn.uvm.edu/wdi/>. Questions can be directed to Dr. Alfred Snider at Alfred.snider@uvm.edu or by calling 802-656-0097.

Students Speaking AND Listening

Middle school debating is a great activity, and is one of the nation's fastest growing academic activities for middle school students. Debating gets students not only to speak out, but also to listen critically to what their opponents have to say.

It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.

- Jeseeph Joubert

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.

- Anne Morrow Lindbergh



Social Studies in the News...

The following news stories illustrate the importance of social studies education for our students, our communities, and our world.

Living the language barrier: For Meshketian Turkish refugees, Barre schools are vital to making life work (The Times Argus, March 6, 2006) <http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060306/NEWS/603060357/1003/NEWS02>

Students to aid Salvadoran street kids (The Addison Independent, April 3, 2006) <http://www.addisonindependent.com/News/040306trip.html>

Geo whiz is second in state (The Burlington Free Press, April 6, 2006) <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060406/NEWS02/604060311/1007/NEWS02&theme>

Milton Mosaic celebrates diversity (The Burlington Free Press, April 24, 2006) <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060422/NEWS02/604220305/1007/NEWS02&theme=>

Saving Democracy, Pupil by Pupil (David Broder, The Washington Post, April 24, 2006) *requires free registration <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/21/AR2006042101622.html?sub=new>

Students Show Their Stuff *Continued...*

The following teachers have students who received first place awards at History Day:

Craig Willey

Mill River Union H.S.

Kathy Douglas

Ferrisburgh Central School

Madeline Sherman

Proctor Jr/Sr H.S.

Mary Louise Collins

Lake Champlain Waldorf H.S.

Cookie Step and Keith Bouchard

Vergennes Union H.S.

Shelley Townsend

Mt. Holly School

Keith Harrington

Poultney Elementary School

Scotty Tabachnik

Brattleboro Union H.S.

Sue Pollender

Black River H.S.

Andrew Homan and Abigail Diehl-Noble

Lake Champlain Waldorf H.S.

Kathy Douglas -- Vermont-NEA Vermont History Day Educator of the Year award

Terry Buehner, Burlington High school -- Shelburne Museum Student Participation Award.

where they will represent Vermont in the national finals of We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution, the highly prestigious academic competition about the U.S. Constitution. The students have studied for months with their teacher, Tim Root, to prepare for their role as experts testifying on constitutional issues in a simulated congressional hearing.

The first round of the national finals will involve entire classes making presentations and answering questions on constitutional topics before a panel of judges made up of scholars, lawyers, and government leaders from around the country. The championship round will take place on May 1 in Senate hearing rooms on Capitol Hill.

During their stay in Washington, D.C., the students will tour historic sites and will have the opportunity to visit Senators Leahy and Jeffords, as

well as Congressman Sanders.

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by an Act of Congress. The program is directed by the Center for Civic Education in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Kevin Ryan (kryan@vtbar.org) of the Vermont Bar Association administers the program for Vermont while working closely with Bill Haines, who serves as District Coordinator.

Nationwide, the program is implemented at the upper elementary, middle, and high school levels and has reached more than 28 million students during its nineteen year history.

Teaching the Teachers

On Monday, March 27th the normal professional development model was tipped on its head: Students from all over Vermont converged at the Sheraton in Burlington to share their ideas about teaching and learning with teachers and

fellow students. The theme for the day, "How can teachers and students collaborate to improve learning?" was the focus for workshops ranging from Developing Student Voice in Schools to Teaching English Language Learners. Winooski High School student Keara Mahoney kicked off the day with a keynote address that asked teachers and students to "separate themselves from their ideas in order to have true dialogue." Representative Bernie Sanders spoke and congratulated the students and teachers on their courage in participating.

Many of the ideas shared in the workshops revolved around students playing a larger role in their learning. Workshops were hosted by students from CVU, Windsor, Winooski, Milton, and BFA St. Albans.

The conference will take place again next spring and youth are encouraged to submit workshop proposals to ctoland@winooski.k12.vt.us.



Winning "We the People" Team along with teacher Tim Root and their representatives to the Vermont legislature



Student presenter at "Teach the Teachers" conference

Untitled

as i sit here staring out
the window i see a plane
doing loops twists dives and turns
and then i blinked my eye and
saw it was a fly on the window.

- Ronald Kent

from Living in Whales: Vermont Public School Stories and Poems
Vermont Arts Council, 1972